



News Release

WISCONSIN ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Public Affairs Office
2400 Wright Street
Madison, WI 53704

Contact: Lt. Col. Tim Donovan
608-242-3050

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State's top military officer to honor National Guard Challenge Academy graduates

Maj. Gen. Al Wilkening, the adjutant general of Wisconsin, will address the 10th graduating class of the Wisconsin National Guard Challenge Academy and will present their commencement certificates at a ceremony Saturday, June 14, at McFarland High School, McFarland, Wis. Parents, relatives, mentors, and friends will also be on hand to celebrate the success of 77 teenagers whose lives have been changed by completing the course. The cadets come from 29 counties throughout the state.

The goal of the academy is to re-shape the lives of 16-to-18-year-olds who are at risk for problems as they enter adulthood. The program uses a structured, military-style environment to build cadets' self-confidence, leadership skills, and personal discipline.

A typical Challenge Academy day lasts from 5:15 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., with classroom work, community service, physical fitness and team activities. Cadets spend about four hours each day in classes to learn basic math, reading and writing skills. Classes are taught by state-certified teachers.

The Academy curriculum also includes a career skills and exploration program, health and drug abuse awareness, leadership, discipline and physical fitness.

Upon graduating from the 22-week course, each cadet is paired with a mentor in the cadet's hometown. The mentors meet regularly with the cadet to offer guidance and encouragement, and to keep the cadet's new life on track.

Twenty-eight states offer similar programs nationwide. More than 30,000 teens have successfully completed National Guard youth programs since 1993. More than 90 percent of cadets who finish the program receive their high school equivalency diploma (HSED), and more than 80 percent stay out of trouble with the law.

The Challenge Academy will begin its next 22-week class Jul. 17, 2003. That class will graduate on Dec. 13, 2003. Applications are available for future classes by contacting the Challenge Academy at (608) 269-4605.

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NOTE: News media organizations are also welcome to attend. The graduation ceremony begins at 12:00 noon, preceded by a drill team performance at 11:30, at McFarland High School Gym, 5103 Farwell Street, McFarland. Graduates come from 29 Wisconsin counties:

Ashland	1	Eau Claire	2	Pierce	2	Vernon	1
Barron	1	Jefferson	4	Portage	2	Walworth	1
Brown	2	Kenosha	2	Racine	1	Washington	2
Chippewa	8	Lincoln	1	Rock	7	Waukesha	7
Columbia	1	Milwaukee	6	Sauk	1	Winnebago	1
Dane	8	Monroe	4	Sawyer	1		
Dodge	3	Oneida	1	Sheboygan	3		
Dunn	2	Outagamie	1	Trempealeau	1		